‘IT’S ABOUT FEELING CONFIDENT’

ALEXA CHUNG OFFERS HER TAKE ON SEX APPEAL. PAGE 16

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NYC’s mayor fights back over state’s pre-K scheme

Major initiative. Mayor de Blasio said he would resist changes to his universal prekindergarten proposal after reports Gov. Cuomo might come up with a statewide plan. **Money.** He maintains that an income tax hike is the best route to funding the project. PAGE 02

Let Distrify electrify your laptop

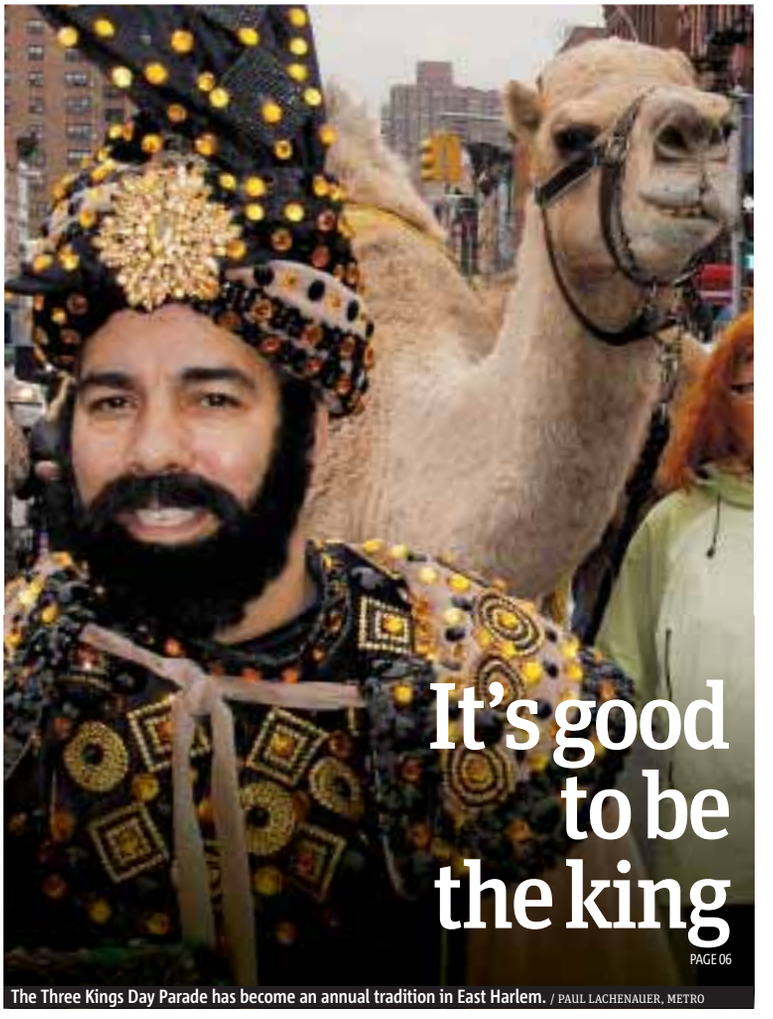
PAGES 12-13

Steamboat Springs gets high marks

PAGE 15

Conquer cabin fever as a family!

PAGE 18



It’s good to be the king

PAGE 06

The Three Kings Day Parade has become an annual tradition in East Harlem. / PAUL LACHENAUER, METRO

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1 NEWS

Quoted

"From what I understand, the effort that will be made through health facilities is a very careful and smart one. And I think it responds to people's legitimate needs."

Mayor de Blasio on Gov. Cuomo's reported push for medical marijuana in New York

Top 3

What's trending online at Metro.us

1 'The new trailer for season 2 of "House of Cards" is pretty dramatic'

2 'VIDEO: NBC debuts first promo video for "Late Night with Seth Meyers"'

3 'What Paris Hilton thinks of Kim Kardashian's parenting skills'

Speaker's race

LANCE BASS
GETTY IMAGES

Lance Bass endorses Mark-Viverito

Harlem Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito secured the coveted 'N Sync endorsement in the race to become the next City Council speaker.

Lance Bass joined with LGBT community activists to announce his support for the councilwoman Monday.

"Melissa has been an effective and consistent advocate for the LGBT community," Bass said in a statement. "She has spent her entire career fighting for social and economic justice. I support her whole heartedly and urge other members of the LGBT to do likewise."

Mark-Viverito declared victory last month after a majority of 51 council members pledged to vote for her. That support came after Mayor Bill de Blasio expressed his preference for the councilwoman in phone calls to several council members.

Despite her support from the council and Bass, East Side Councilman Dan Garodnick remains in the running. **ANNA SANDERS**

De Blasio resists pre-K alternative

Hike. The mayor said raising income taxes is the most reliable pre-K funding option.

Mayor Bill de Blasio resisted an alternative to his proposed tax plan Monday after reports suggested Gov. Andrew Cuomo was looking for a way to fund universal pre-kindergarten statewide.

One of his signature proposals during the campaign, de Blasio is pushing to fund universal pre-K and after-school programs with an income tax hike on the wealthiest New Yorkers.

"We're asking the wealthy to do a little more. We think they can handle it," de Blasio said during a press conference touting labor support of the plan.

While the mayor declined to comment on what he would do if the state funded pre-K, he noted children are often the first affected by budget cuts.

"We know the history. We know that if it is not protected, it will be fought each and every year. And that's not good, that's not healthy for our children. Again, if the state has additional resources," he said. "There are many other appropriate things that need to be addressed, things that New York City has been waiting for for a long time."

The governor previously expressed support for universal pre-K but has remained vague about funding for any expansion.

During a press conference Monday, Cuomo denied a Capital New York report that he would announce plans to fund universal pre-K in Wednesday's State of the State address.

ANNA SANDERS
anna.sanders@metro.us

Mayor Bill de Blasio said that he will continue to push for his tax hike on the wealthy to fund pre-kindergarten. / ANNA SANDERS, METRO

Consensus

De Blasio said he wouldn't alter his plans for the tax until he heard from Cuomo directly.

- If state funding were to come, de Blasio said, "We're not going to bargain against ourselves."
- "We don't want half-measures. We don't want partial funding," he added.

Funding

"We know the history. We know that if it is not protected, it will be fought each and every year. And that's not good, that's not healthy for our children."

De Blasio on funding pre-K through the state budget

Theater. Two-for-one Broadway tickets are on sale this week

Theatergoers can purchase two-for-one tickets to popular shows beginning Monday as part of the city's Broadway Week promotion.

The tickets can be purchased for shows Jan. 21 to Feb. 6 through NYC & Company, the city's official marketing, tourism and partnership organization.

The Broadway Week promotion includes some newer shows, such as the "Pippin" revival and "Cinderella," along with classics like "Wicked" and "The Lion King."

Tickets are sold online at www.nycgo.com/broadwayweek.

ANNA SANDERS

Chronicles of NYFD

Time-Life Building evacuated after fire

The Time-Life Building at 51st Street and 7th Avenue was temporarily evacuated on Monday due to a manhole fire outside the building, according to the FDNY. More than 1,500 people were asked to leave the building.

ALLEN HOUSTON

Bronx. Man, 21, shot dead inside lobby at Castle Hill Houses

Police are investigating a shooting at a Bronx public housing development that left a 21-year-old man dead on Sunday afternoon.

Christian Hernandez was shot shortly after 2 p.m. inside the lobby of 530 Olmstead Ave. at the Castle Hill Houses, police said. Cops found him with two gunshot wounds to the torso. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Hernandez lived inside the building where he was shot, according to police.

There have been no arrests.

The investigation is ongoing. **LAURA SHIN**

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– Fox News 2013

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Cuomo pushes $2 billion tax cut in New York

Changing image
"Over the past three years, we have made unprecedented progress toward curbing the rise of taxes and government spending in New York, transforming a state budget with a $10 billion deficit to a $2 billion surplus." Andrew Cuomo
Gov. Andrew Cuomo wants New York to shed its image as a high tax state. / GETTY IMAGES

Reducing burden. The governor said the cuts will ease the cost of living for families and bring new business to the state.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said on Monday he would back proposals to cut taxes in the state by $2 billion over the next three years.

Cuomo said he is trying to reduce the tax burden on families and shed the state's image of an onerous destination for business.

New York state ranks low in surveys of taxation and ease of doing business. The state came last in a recent report by the Tax Foundation that faulted "complex, non-neutral taxes with comparatively high rates."

The proposals mirrored the December findings of a state tax commission set up by Cuomo. They include a two-year freeze on property tax, an increase in the estate tax threshold, lowering corporate taxes and phasing out a surcharge on utilities.

Cuomo will include the proposals in his yearly State of the State address in Albany on Wednesday. **REUTERS**

By the numbers

6.5

The corporate tax rate in New York would drop to its lowest level since 1968.

Special delivery

Bronx man fights off robbers

A Bronx man fought off two would-be robbers, one posing as a UPS worker, just two days before Christmas, police said.

The robber posing as the delivery man rang the man's doorbell claiming to have a large parcel. The men tried to enter but the resident pushed them out. The pair then fled. **ANNA SANDERS**

G train. Suspension coming this week

Commuters can thank the bitter cold for relief from G train headaches.

Monday and Tuesday night work on the G train was postponed, so the much-disparaged line will operate normally at the beginning of the week, the MTA said.

Service is suspended from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. on Wednesday and Thursday nights between Bedford-Nostrand avenues and Church Avenue.

Free shuttle buses and F trains provide transportation alternatives from Jay St.-MetroTech. Visit mta.info. **ANNA SANDERS**

G Train / GETTY IMAGES

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Three Kings Day Parade takes over East Harlem

The Three Kings Day Parade marched through East Harlem on Monday, in commemoration of the three kings or wise men who visited the newborn Jesus. The event, which took place on the 12th and last day of Christmas, began at Lexington Avenue and 106th Street. Comptroller Scott Stringer, Congressman Jose Serrano, Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito and Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez took part in the event. / PAUL LACHENAUER, METRO

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Travel Alternatives:

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- Transfer between G trains and free shuttle buses at Bedford-Nostrand Avs.
- Take the F for service between Jay St-MetroTech and Church Av.
- Transfer between free shuttle buses and F trains at Jay St-MetroTech.
- A service is also available between Hoyt-Schermerhorn Sts and Jay St-MetroTech.

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Arctic chill brings freezing weather to much of nation

Too cold for class. Oklahoma City and Tulsa schools were closed because of the extreme cold.

Commuters make a sub-zero trek to offices on Monday in Chicago. / GETTY IMAGES

A blast of Arctic air gripped the vast middle of the United States on Monday, with the coldest temperatures in two decades threatening lives, forcing business and school closures, and canceling thousands of flights.

Shelters for the homeless were overwhelmed and oil production could come to a standstill as the severe cold, described by some meteorologists as the "polar vortex" and dubbed the "polar pig" by the media, brought temperatures below zero.

Temperatures were 20 to 40 degrees below average in parts of Montana, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan and Nebraska, according to the National Weather Service.

The Arctic air was moving toward the East Coast, where temperatures were expected to fall throughout Monday to about zero on Tuesday.

The coldest temperatures in years were expected in southern states.

The cold threatened to disrupt oil production, particularly in North Dakota, which could push fuel prices higher, analysts said. It also stalled grain and livestock shipments, and posed a threat to the dormant winter wheat crop.

The frigid U.S. temperatures mirrored or outdid those in places like Almaty, Kazakhstan, where it was minus 2 degrees Fahrenheit; Mongolia, where temperatures reached minus 10 F, and Irkutsk, in Siberia, where it was minus 24 F. **REUTERS**

Quoted

"Cold temperatures and gusty winds associated with an Arctic air mass will continue dangerously cold wind chills as far south as Brownsville, Texas, and central Florida." National Weather Service

Appeal. US Supreme Court halts same-sex marriages in Utah

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday halted gay marriage in Utah at least temporarily by granting a request by state officials appealing a lower court ruling that had allowed same-sex weddings to go ahead in the heavily Mormon state.

The decision by the court means that gay weddings in the state are now on hold while the case is appealed to the Denver-based 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Hundreds of gay couples in Utah have received marriage licenses since the Dec. 20 ruling by U.S. District Judge Robert Shelby.

Shelby declined to stay his ruling pending appeal, meaning gay couples were able to marry in the state immediately. The appeals court also declined to stay the ruling, leaving the U.S. Supreme Court as the state's last recourse. **REUTERS**

$3.3 billion deal

T-Mobile to buy Verizon Wireless spectrum

T-Mobile is buying wireless airwave licenses from Verizon Wireless to improve its high-speed network in a $3.3 billion deal and said it hopes to follow up with more spectrum purchases.

T-Mobile said it will pay Verizon Wireless $2.365 billion cash and give it $950 million worth of high-frequency spectrum. **REUTERS**

First woman

Yellen confirmed by Senate vote as next chief of Fed Reserve

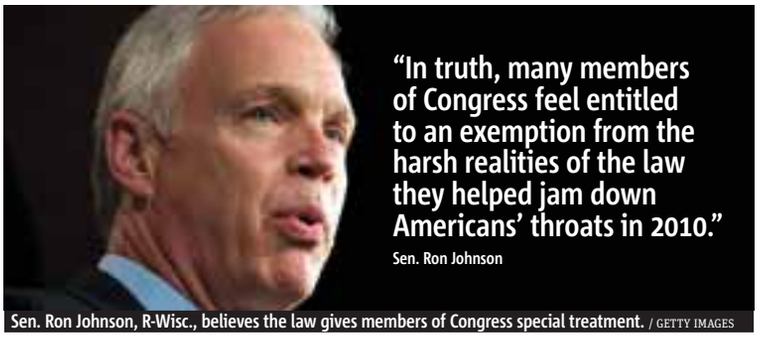
Janet Yellen won U.S. Senate confirmation to become the 15th chair of the Federal Reserve and the first woman to head the central bank.

Yellen, 67, was confirmed by a 56-26 vote. She'll replace Ben Bernanke on Jan. 31, as the Fed trims monthly bond purchases in a first step toward lessening the unprecedented stimulus.

Currently Fed vice chair, Yellen has backed Bernanke's efforts to steer the economy through its most severe crisis since the 1930s. **BLOOMBERG**

JANET YELLEN
GETTY IMAGES

Sen. Ron Johnson sues over health care subsidy for Congress


"In truth, many members of Congress feel entitled to an exemption from the harsh realities of the law they helped jam down Americans' throats in 2010."
Sen. Ron Johnson

Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wisc., believes the law gives members of Congress special treatment. / GETTY IMAGES

Obamacare. The law has spawned many other lawsuits.

Republican Sen. Ron Johnson filed a lawsuit on Monday challenging "special treatment" for members of the U.S. Congress in the application of President Barack Obama's health care law.

Johnson, of Wisconsin, wrote in the Wall Street Journal that the Obama administration exceeded its legal authority by arranging federal subsidies for members of Congress and their staff under the Affordable Care Act, known as Obamacare.

"The president and his congressional supporters have also broken their promise to the American people that Obamacare was going to be so good that they would participate in it just like everyone else," Johnson wrote.

Unlike millions of Americans, he wrote, lawmakers and their staffs can receive employer contributions to help pay for their health insurance.

Johnson said the lawsuit, to be filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, would challenge an October ruling by the Office of Personnel Management "that ignores the clear intent and language of the law."

Lawmakers and their staffs received an exemption allowing them to be covered under a Small Business Health Options Program, he said. The program allows the employer — the federal government — to buy health insurance for employees.

"After groping for a pretext, OPM essentially declared the federal government a small employer," Johnson wrote. "Neat trick, huh?" **REUTERS**

Members

535

The ruling applied to the 535 members of the Senate and House of Representatives and thousands of Capitol Hill staff.

Misdemeanor

Man gets eight months in prison for hitting child on plane

A former aerospace executive who slapped a crying toddler on an airplane and used a racial slur against the child, who is black, received an eight-month prison sentence on Monday for an incident his attorney blamed on his alcoholism.

Joe Rickey Hundley, who apologized in court to the child's mother, was accused of striking the 19-month-old boy in the face on board a Delta Air Lines flight from Minneapolis to Atlanta last February.

Hundley pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor assault charge in October. **REUTERS**

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7 Financial resolutions for 2014

Taking time to sit down with your finances now can help you stay on track year-round. / COLOURBOX

Fresh start. Get your bank account back on track with these helpful tips.

The holidays leave many people financially strapped, but now is the best time to get back on track. No matter what your big goals are for 2014 — buying a house, taking a vacation or just fattening your savings account — the key is to plan. Financial journalist Richard Satran partnered with McGraw-Hill Federal Credit Union to share these tips.

1 **Do an inventory.** The first step is sitting down and understanding your spending habits. Figure out how much you're making after taxes and what you're spending it on. You might be surprised at what you find out.

2 **Start saving more money.** After you understand how much you're making and where it's going, figure out what you can cut down on. Can you trade cable for Netflix? Should you move to a cheaper neighborhood when your lease is up? It might take some creativity, but there are always ways to save.

3 **Set up automatic deductions.** Now that you've found a few ways to decrease your spending, set up automatic payments into your savings account. That way you learn to budget around a new baseline. Even if you can only afford to put away $20 more a month than you do now, it's a start. You can always re-evaluate your finances later and make necessary adjustments.

4 **Keep your debt manageable.** A lot of people want to pay off their student loans before their credit cards, but it might make more sense to do it the other way around. Credit card companies tend to charge high interest rates; the key is prioritizing the debt that costs you the most.

5 **Plan for retirement.** Even if you're just starting your career, thinking about retirement should factor into your money plans now and every year. The easiest way to help yourself is by contributing to your company's 401K. There are also private companies you can turn to if your employer doesn't offer a 401K payment plan.

6 **Get professional advice.** There isn't a one-size-fits-all finance plan that works for everyone. Sitting down with a financial adviser can help you find creative ways to cut costs, help you prioritize debt and learn ways to make your future goals a reality. Together, you could uncover opportunities you might not know you have.

Tip No. 7

Make a list of your long-term goals

Think about what you want for yourself and your family. Do you want to buy a house? Pay for your kids' college? Write down your goals and the amount of money it will take to make these dreams a reality. Then, figure out what it will take to make it happen. Is it starting a house fund savings account and feeding it $100 a month? Figure it out and monitor your progress.

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An open letter to celebrities who can't shut up

Say you are reading this and you are a celebrity/public figure. Let's try an exercise: What do you do if you think of something that maybe isn't the most PC thing in the world? Do you: A. Say it out loud. B. Keep it to yourself. C. Write it in a journal that you then burn, never to see the light of day. If you answered "B" or "C," you have a long future ahead of you in show business. If you answered "A" — we need to talk.

The latest celebrity to fall victim to their own inability to just STFU? Evander Holyfield, who is making a splash with his stay on "Celebrity Big Brother" thanks to an extended rant he recently vented about homosexuality, describing it as "a choice" that "ain't normal" and can be fixed.

"If you were born and your leg were turned this way, what would you do? You go to the doctor and get it fixed back, right?" he said to a fellow housemate. "You know how handicapped people are born? You can't say, 'Because they are born that way, you can't move that.'"

Producers for the series quickly addressed the issue, saying in a statement that they'd relayed to Holyfield that his views "could be seen as extremely offensive to many people. He was warned to think carefully about repeating them."

Good grief. Come on, Evander. You lost an ear. You must know what it feels like to be different. Homosexuality can be "fixed?" Just how many blows to the head did you suffer during your boxing career?

THAT COMMENT WAS NOT EXACTLY A KNOCKOUT.
GETTY IMAGES

Madonna positions herself as a cool mom

Madonna posted the above picture on Instagram of her son Rocco, 13, and several friends ringing in the New Year surrounded by liquor bottles. She captioned it, "The party has just begun! Bring it! 2014," After several hundred perturbed comments on her pic, Madonna posted another photo of young Rocco, this time sans booze. "No one was drinking we were just having fun! Calm down and get a sense of humor! Don't start the year off with judgement!" she wrote.

2 CULTURE

THE WORD

Dorothy Robinson takes on the world of gossip.

DOROTHY ROBINSON
@dorothyatmetro
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Stream 'The Act of Killing' on the

Movies. Through our new partnership with the streaming service Distrify, you can watch new and old films online.

For better or worse, movies rarely take up physical space these days. They live in a digital realm. They're shot digitally and projected digitally. And rather than eat up real estate on shelves, the home versions are just clicks away.

Starting today, Metro is teaming with Distrify, an online film distributor, to bring you films, new and old, to watch online through its service.

Distrify allows viewers to rent, and in some cases buy, films. For rented movies, patrons have 30 days to watch their selection up to five times. Can't finish the movie in one sitting? The player will remember where you left off.

You can also discuss the film on our website in the comments section. Let your opinions be known, start debates, request more information, harangue us for our allegedly terrible taste and whatever else you'd like to say.

Our first offering is "The Act of Killing," one of the major frontrunners for this year's Best Documentary Oscar and among the finest nonfiction films of 2013.

Made by Texas-born, Denmark-based filmmaker Joshua Oppenheimer, it explores a chilling passage in Indonesian history. During a military coup in the '60s, a group of low-level gangsters were recruited to form death squads. At least 500,000 people deemed Communists were massacred, though some estimates put that number at more than one million.

Despite being charged with human rights violations, the murderers were never tried and in fact are celebrities, openly boasting

"The Act of Killing" was one of 2013's most acclaimed and shocking documentaries.

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about their crimes. Oppenheimer spent years talking to former perpetrators, none of whom expressed remorse, before settling on the group he profiled.

Oppenheimer asked them to recreate their crimes in movie form. Each chose a different genre, yielding some of the craziest sights in recent cinematic history.

"The Act of Killing" has proved a worldwide sensation, including at home, where it avoided being outlawed and instead has created a national conversation about the genocide that tragically formed the basis of modern Indonesia. It's by turns horrifying, darkly comic and deeply moving, challenging ideas of what to do with evil — particularly criminals who have never been forced to question of pay for their actions.

MATT PRIGGE
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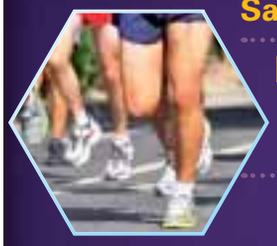

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John Green's top YA picks

The "Fault in Our Stars" author reveals the five best young adult books he's read lately.

EMILY LAURENCE

1 'Eleanor & Park'

by Rainbow Rowell

"This is one of the best love stories I've ever read. It's a sensitive and compelling portrait of poverty and abuse. It's the kind of book you force your friends to read, and all my friends have adored it, too."

2 'Two Boys Kissing'

by David Levithan

"I just finished this book a few days ago. It's a wonderful multigenerational story of love and friendship, centered on two boys trying to break the record for the world's longest kiss."

3 'More Than This'

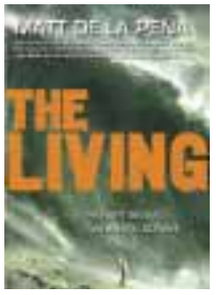
by Patrick Ness

"Books are often described as 'mind-blowing,' but this is one of the few books in which, while reading it, I have exclaimed aloud, 'Oh. My. God.' on multiple occasions. I won't tell you anything else about it. Just read it."

More 'best books'

See James Dashner's list

Green wasn't the only young adult author who gave us his top picks. Head to **www.metro.us** to see "The Maze Runner" author James Dashner's favorites of the year.



4 'The Living'

by Matt de la Pena

"De la Pena's post-disaster adventure novel is full of action that keeps you turning the pages, but the book is special because of its extraordinary protagonist, Shy, who I haven't been able to shake from my mind in the weeks since I read the book."

5 'The Coldest Girl In Coldtown'

by Holly Black

"We've all read YA vampire stories, but no one writes like Holly Black: Her worlds are funny and eerily vivid, and Coldtown — a rollicking and decadent ghetto — is one of my favorite fantasy novel settings."

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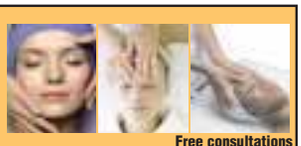

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Champagne powder awaits in Steamboat Springs

Ski. We love skiing in the Northeast as much as the next person, but for serious slopes and plenty of fun ways to warm up, head out west to this cozy Colorado escape.

It's a slippery slope: Many who intend only to visit Steamboat Springs end up staying there. / CASSANDRA GARRISON, METRO

Despite its ominous implication, the Yampa Valley Curse — as Steamboat Springs, Colo., locals call it — is generally regarded as more of a blessing. Time and time again, when chatting with those who have made this nook of the Rockies their home, the same story is repeated: It started as a summer job or a winter vacation — and 25 years later, they're still here.

After a couple days in this mountain town, it's easy to see why. With its signature Champagne Powder (snow so fluffy and light, it "fizzes" as your skis cut through it), Steamboat's motto of "Come for the winter, stay for the summer" hardly scratches the surface of the adventures available all year round.

As a winter destination, Steamboat offers dozens of trails and slopes for beginners as well as advanced skiers (more Olympians come out of Steamboat Springs than any other city in the country). From world-class skiing to natural hot springs and a charming town with foodie flare, Steamboat has something for everyone — which is precisely why so many fall under its spell.

Stay

Guests will feel like mountain royalty at **The Antlers**, a Wyndham Vacation Rentals property. These sprawling luxury townhomes have between three and five bedrooms, a chef's kitchen and ski valet service with heated boot lockers. (Really, is there anything more glorious than warm ski boots?) An on-call shuttle makes for a quick trip to the base of the slopes or downtown Steamboat. Three-bedroom rentals start at $417/night and go up to $1,668 for Presidents' holiday rates.
2085 Ski Time Square Drive
Steamboat Springs
970-879-5548

Live just off the trails during your vacation. / WYNDHAM VACATION RENTALS

Bunny hill

New to the slopes?

For those who are just starting out with snow sports, January happens to be a great time to learn, thanks to Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month, a nonprofit that focuses on expanding skiing and snowboarding and bringing more attention to the resorts the U.S. has to offer. In conjunction with the event, more than 300 resorts have deals on rentals, lessons and lift tickets. Go to skiandsnowboardmonth.org to learn more.

Mountain munching

Eat

We overheard a Steamboat regular raving about **bistro c.v.**, and this cozy restaurant in town lives up to the hype. A warm atmosphere gives way to a seasonal menu that would impress any big-city dweller and a dessert list that will knock those wool socks right off. If the Berkshire pork duo is being offered, order it straight away.
345 Lincoln Ave.,
Steamboat Springs
970-879-4197

Don't miss the pork duo — pork loin and pork belly — at bistro c.v. / CASSANDRA GARRISON, METRO

Cafe Diva at the base of the slopes is the place for surf and turf — Rocky Mountains style. An elk tenderloin is accompanied by diver scallops done to perfection. Wine lovers will be delighted by a lengthy list with a few local surprises.
1855 Ski Time Square Dr.,
Steamboat Springs
970-871-0508

There may be no faster way to the slopes after rolling out of bed than by staying at **Trailhead Lodge**, another Wyndham Vacation Rentals property, which boasts access to the Wildhorse Gondola just steps from the front door. These single-floor units range from studios to three-bedrooms and a den with impressive fireplaces and a grotto-style hot tub on the property that is irresistible after a day of skiing. Rates range from $165/night to $676 in high season.
1175 Bangtail Way
Steamboat Springs
970-879-9000

Play

When you're done skiing, give those legs a break and try a different kind of thrill with **Steamboat Snowmobile Tours**. After a quick tutorial, a guide will lead the way through winding snowmobile trails that lead to breathtaking views of the Rockies.
31825 County Road 64
Steamboat Springs
970-879-9073

A visit to Steamboat Springs isn't complete without a trip to the natural hot springs at **Strawberry Park**. With several pools offering varying degrees of hot and (beware!) cold water, an entire afternoon can easily slip away lazing in the springs before making the dreaded scamper back to the warming hut to get dressed. Tip for the adventurous: Clothing is optional after dark.
44200 County Road 36
Steamboat Springs
970-879-0342

Shop

Signs for **F.M. Light and Sons** are dotted along the road into town, and this classic Western store — and longtime Steamboat staple — is perfect for your mountain attire needs. The boot selection alone is worth a visit, if for nothing more than window shopping.
830 Lincoln Ave.,
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970-879-1822

CASSANDRA GARRISON
cassandra.garrison@metro.us

PLUS

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If mountains, beautiful trees and snow are more your winter getaway style than any beach resort, check out this stunning renovated barn in Manchester, Vt. The 54-acre property is the perfect unconventional choice for ski season in the Northeast, with access to slopes, as well as a private ice skating rink on the property. Ideal for families and small groups, this two-bedroom, two-bath home is bordered by a striking forest, complete with meadows, hiking and snowshoe trails, and more. The nightly rate is $400 and sleeps up to six people. Search rental ID # 107487 on HomeAway.com for more information on this listing or to check out other vacation rentals for your next trip.

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In stores

Forever 21 debuts premium leather shoe line

How fun is it to get complimented on your cute skirt or cropped pants and then totally shock the admirer when you reveal your fashion source isn't some high-end brand but rather a score from Forever 21? Well now, you can fake 'em out with even more affordable finds in the new year, because Forever 21 has just introduced a new shoe collection made from premium leather. The line consists of 10 covetable styles such as distressed leather high-tops and pointed cutout booties, and will range in price from $49.80-$79.80 — making stopping at just one pair impossible.

METRO

The collection hits stores on Friday. / PROVIDED

When it comes to beauty, Alexa Chung is a minimalist

Primp. It's hard to find the "routine" in Alexa Chung's beauty routine. When the cameras are off, the fashion darling leaves her makeup at home and prefers to go natural — even on first dates.

Like you, Alexa Chung is too lazy to wear makeup on the weekends and forgets her razor when she travels. We chatted with the fashion icon about her beauty rituals at the launch of Alexa for Eyeko, her new collaboration with the U.K. cosmetics brand.

What's your daily beauty routine?
It's very minimal. I'm lucky because I'm usually on TV so someone does my makeup for me. But for the weekends, I really don't wear much makeup; I just put moisturizer on. I like Laura Mercier.

How do you protect your skin in the winter?
Oh, man, it's rough. I've been using Cetaphil, it's like a medicinal moisturizer for your body but it is just so plain. I use a vitamin E oil and mix them together to make a richer cream.

Do you bring your makeup with you so you can reapply on the go?
No. I'm no maintenance throughout the day. I would rather look like s— and not worry about it than constantly be reapplying. I'm just too lazy. I would like to look nice all the time, but I just can't be bothered.

When she does wear makeup, Alexa Chung nails the cateye look thanks to these Eyeko products. / PROVIDED

What do you listen to when you're putting on your makeup?
I listen to Solange, Lorde and Drake a lot. I also like George Harrison and Beach House.

How do you manage your beauty routine on the road?
I always forget a razor and a toothbrush. It's insane. I just keep everything in one bag. I have the bodywash/shampoo things decantered into smaller things, so that's just ready to go whenever. And then moisturizer — it's very very important for the flight to have it on you. I'd go so far as to say a hydrating mist but I don't ever take it with me. Sometimes I get photographed at the airport, so lately I've been taking a red lipstick so I can feel a little more glamorous.

What are your favorite products for date night?
Oh, God, I hate dates. They are so embarrassing. I tend to do this thing, which is personal to me, it's a weird quirk I have. If I really like someone and go on a date with him, I rebel and I wear dungarees and no makeup. I want to think, if they like me looking like this, then they are going to really like me when I turn it up.

MAJA LUNDAGER
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I really, truly believe that it's about feeling confident. I don't think you should ever walk in heels you can't maneuver in or, like, wear seven pairs of Spanx or a padded bra. Because what if you were pinched into this bandage dress and [later your boyfriend] finds out that you like wearing Sonic Youth T-shirts and jeans? They are going to be like, "But when I dated you, you were hot." So I like to be pretty up front about it.

ALEXA CHUNG
GETTY IMAGES

Harlem girls 'skate' through school

Nonprofit. A creative program helps girls reach their full potential through ice skating.

Currently 175 girls participate in Figure Skating In Harlem, with even more joining the summer session. / MAJA LUNDAGER PEDERSEN

See more at www.metro.us

The saying "if you fall, get up and try again" isn't always easy, especially if you're a girl living in a low-income neighborhood and can't seem to find your balance. That's why, in 1997, former competitive figure skater Sharon Cohen started the nonprofit Figure Skating in Harlem, an after-school program for girls in underserved New York City communities.

"Ice skating takes a lot of resilience," Cohen tells us. "Even the best skaters in the world fall. So the first thing you learn in skating is that it's OK to make a mistake; it's OK to fall down because you just get back up and you try harder."

Potential students must complete an application and interview process and are chosen based on need, residency and commitment level. The students sign a contract promising to maintain at least a B+ average in school — otherwise their time on the ice is limited. In 2012, the average had to be at least a B, and 84 percent of the students maintained that while 36 percent received straight A's.

"The girls understand the discipline that comes with athletics," Cohen says. "Sports teach people how to set goals, how to concentrate and focus, and I think all those things apply to your academics and to life."

Currently, 175 girls between ages 6 and 18 attend the school-year program, and even more participate in the summer. About 75 percent identify as black, 15 percent as Latina and 10 percent as multiracial; more than two-thirds come from low-income families or families living at or below the poverty level.

Girls aren't only offered ice skating classes but receive extra academic classes and tutoring as well. They are also taught basic life skills, such as money management and nutrition.

"The kids are striving to be the best they can be, whether it's in school or on the ice or in their life. They can dream bigger and they can imagine themselves doing things they never thought they could do because skating wasn't necessarily something they thought they could do," Cohen says.

Quoted

"Ice skating takes a lot of resilience. Even the best skaters in the world fall. So the first thing you learn in skating is that it's OK to make a mistake; it's OK to fall down because you just get back up and you try harder."

Sharon Cohen
Figure Skating in Harlem founder

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Winter family night ideas

Snowy night in. Discover five fun family ideas you can do at home.

If queuing up a movie has become your default family night activity, it's time to shake things up. Here's a list of fun activities you can do without dealing with the freezing weather outside.

Family time doesn't have to feel forced. / COLOURBOX

Set up a homemade hot chocolate bar

Give your cup of Swiss Miss an upgrade by going all out. Use milk, cocoa powder, sugar and a pinch of salt to brew a batch of hot cocoa on the stove and put bowls of various toppings out on the table. Some ideas: crushed chocolate mint Oreos, caramel crumbles, mini marshmallows, colorful sprinkles and of course whipped cream. Sipping your warm drinks together will give your family a chance to simply talk and hang out. If your family is too busy during the week to share meals together, this time will feel extra meaningful.

Fill a photo album together

Instead of relying on Facebook to hold all your family memories, create some actual, physical albums. Before family night, visit FotoFriend.com to get your Facebook pics printed, as well as other pictures you are relying on your phone or computer to store. They'll be shipped straight to your house. Take your kids along on the shopping trip to help pick out the albums. Then, you're ready to get started. Your family will have a great time laughing together and reliving special memories. And at the end of the night, you'll have a priceless keepsake.

Learn something new together

Whether it's getting everyone in the kitchen to cook a new dish, building a model, painting a birdhouse or learning a new foreign language through a video series together, everyone will get something out of this family night idea. If you choose to go the cooking route, give your child ownership of a task, like getting all the ingredients from the fridge if you have a young child or making a side dish if your kid is older. Helping to make the meal gives everyone a feeling of accomplishment that makes the food that much yummier.

Write letters to extended family members

Grandparents or a favorite aunt will love getting an unexpected surprise in the mail, written by you and your kids. Helping your children think of their recent accomplishments will make them feel proud. It's also the perfect time to tell your favorite family stories, making your kids feel valued and happy to be a part of the fam.

EMILY LAURENCE
emily.laurence@metro.us

Game night

Get competitive

If the board games you have seem a bit tired, try Shake Up, which Real Simple magazine deemed "the new Sorry." In this dice-rolling game, players try to be the first to get their pawns through the "safe zone holes." Each round only takes about 15 minutes, allowing time for multiple games — and winners.

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Horoscope

♑ Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan 20. Focus on your home and make changes that ease your stress and add to your comfort.

♒ Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb 18. Make innovative moves that will ensure your financial and emotional freedom. Setting a goal and focusing on your destination will prove a sure strategy for happiness.

♓ Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20. Lend a helping hand, and you will make new contacts and win support for your own goals. Opportunity is knocking.

♈ Aries | March 21-April 20. Don't let opposition stand between you and what you think is right. Choose your words wisely, and don't mince them.

♉ Taurus | April 21-May 21. Keep your eyes open. There will be plenty of obscure movements that could go unnoticed if you aren't observant.

♊ Gemini | May 22-June 20. You need to go where the action is, and don't be afraid to get physical. Participate, but don't expect everything to fall into place.

♋ Cancer | June 21-July 22. Avoid letting a critic put pressure on you. Concentrate on the activities that you feel most comfortable doing, or on a hobby.

♌ Leo | July 23-Aug. 22. Make a personal change that will give you something to look forward to. Improve your appeal or fix up a space to help hone your domestic skills.

♍ Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22. A positive attitude and a plan will lead to satisfaction. Love is on the rise, so plan something special for someone.

♎ Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22. Stay calm and be realistic. You mustn't feel threatened or pressured into doing something. Avoid taking on too much.

♏ Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21. Let your concerns be known. Schedule meetings or an activity that will bring you knowledge.

♐ Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21. Make changes at home that will help you feel better about your future. A move to a location that offers greater opportunities should be considered.

BERNICE BEDE OSOL

Sudoku: Easy and hard

	6	9						
		8	4	9				5
	5					3	9	
	3	7		6	5	4		8
				7				
9		1	2	4		7	5	
	9	4					8	
6				3	4	1		
						5	6	

	7	8	5					1
		3		9				4
	5				3			8
7			9	8		5		
			6		5			
		5		4	7			6
5			1				7	
6				5		3		
3					4	6	8	

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Letters

Don't let Iran talks fool us

The threatening behavior of Iran is a vital issue for the United States. For many years the government of Iran spewed hatred while moving toward development of nuclear weapons. President Obama claims this is intolerable and unacceptable. As a result of the agreement reached between the six major powers and Iran, the progress of the Iranian government has been slowed, but not eliminated or even reversed. Considering that the development of nuclear weapons by other nations went undetected by the entire American intelligence community, I have concerns about these issues.

ARTHUR LEE HORN, VIA EMAIL

North Korea can have her

I wish Janet Napolitano would keep her mouth shut and disappear permanently from our lives. This monster made our air travel a nightmare because of TSA tyranny. Edward Snowden did what was necessary to show us what the government is really up to. This may force the judge to declare surveillance illegal, but most of us already believe it is violating the Constitution. Although I am not a violent person, I would like to send Napolitano to North Korea.

MANANA CHKADUA, VIA EMAIL

letters@metro.us

Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words. Metro reserves the right to edit all letters. Please include your name and contact info.

Online

You can use your smartphone to discover today's crossword answers — right now! Download and open the Blippar app on your smartphone and hold the screen over the puzzle — it's that easy!

Crossword

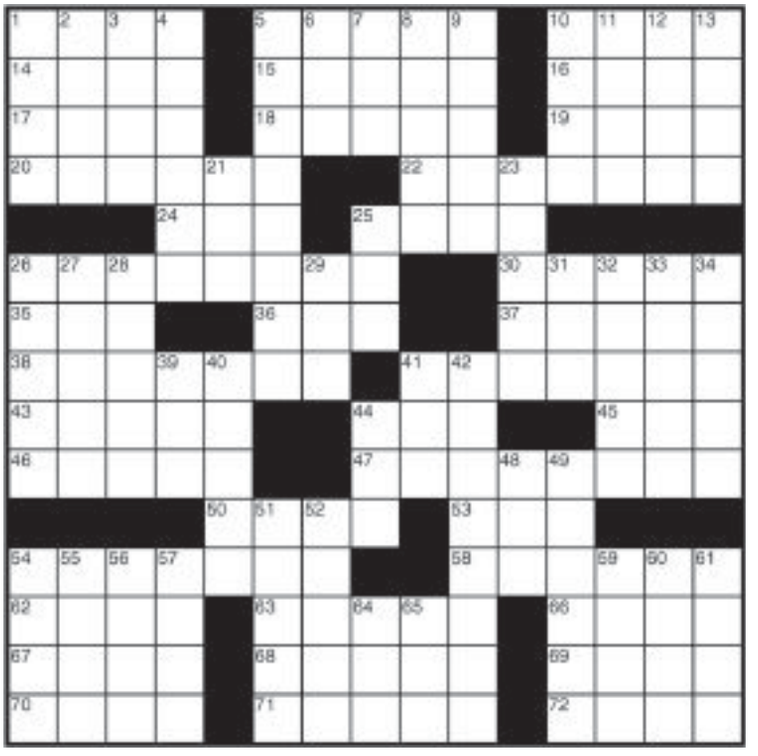
Across

1 Wall climber
5 Twilights
10 Char a steak
14 Promissory notes
15 Pizza topping
16 Gigi's friend
17 Tizzy
18 Ralph— Emerson
19 Tease mercilessly
20 Aft
22 Was in store for
24 — Dawn Chong
25 "The — the limit"!
26 Seems likely (2 wds.)
30 401(k) kin
35 Top-notch pilot
36 Depot (abbr.)
37 Quiz-show host
38 Sailing event
41 Weight-watcher
43 Related to mom
44 Shout "Stroke!"
45 Not waste
46 Choir platform
47 Short-circuits a car (hyph.)
50 Plant parasite
53 Electrical unit
54 Counselor
58 Rodeo event
62 Spooky sound
63 Dalai Lama's land
66 Fermi split it
67 Bonze or friar
68 Overhead
69 — -majeste
70 Refiner's input
71 Followed a pattern
72 Word from the pews

Down

1 Passport companion
2 Smoke-detector output
3 A night in Paris
4 Organic compounds
5 Maine, colloquially (2 wds.)
6 Ms. Merkel
7 — vous plait
8 Brownie maker
9 Like ski slopes
10 Rani's wear
11 Shed, as light
12 — -de-camp
13 Cattail
21 U.K. fliers
23 Requested
25 Tijuana "Mrs."
26 Less cluttered
27 Boadicea's people
28 Painter of ballerinas
29 Make — — double
31 Grounded bird
32 Take place
33 Vee makers
34 Toast starter
39 Wolfed
40 Contract provisos
41 Milne marsupial
42 Blackmailed
44 Ernesto Guevara
48 Famous first baseman
49 Veld antelope
51 Jots
52 Mohawk, e.g.
54 BBs
55 Easy way out
56 Barn topper
57 Calligraphy fluids
59 Object
60 Scent finder
61 Feds (hyph.)
64 Salaam
65 Morn's counterpart

Yesterday's answer



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3 SPORTS

D-Unwilling

Williams scratched again

It was the same old song for Deron Williams on Monday night. The point guard missed last night's game with a sprained left ankle. "This morning he went to go for an MRI," head coach Jason Kidd said. "He wanted to play and we're on the cautious side of him taking the night off." Williams has already missed 11 games this season with two separate left ankle sprains.

Giants' offseason plans: Who goes? Who stays?

NFL. Coming off a sub-.500 season, the Giants have plenty of tough decisions to make this offseason.

Hakeem Nicks may have seen his last games as a member of the New York Giants this past season. / GETTY IMAGES

The Giants, like the 20 other playoff non-participants, have plenty of holes and questions that need answering as they begin an earlier-than-expected offseason.

Big Blue has now missed the playoffs for two straight seasons and four of its last five campaigns. And making matters worse — although they'd never publicly admit it — is the fact that their MetLife Stadium co-tenants, the Jets, had a far more successful season by merely going 8-8 and may have the brighter future going forward.

The Giants are always a glass-half-full organization, so from the top (owner John Mara) on down (head coach Tom Coughlin) the franchise's outlook never seems bleak. They noted how proud they were to finish 2013 7-3 following their horrid 0-6 start.

Fortunately for the Giants, their cap situation for next season is far better than this past campaign. According to the league's projected salary cap of $126.3 million for the 2014 season, the Giants are projected to have about $17.45 million in cap space.

TONY WILLIAMS
sports@metro.us

Free agents to bring back

1 Jon Beason, linebacker — Adding Beason, who was oft-injured and viewed as expendable on a deep Panthers' defense, was a steal for a Giants squad missing an every-down linebacker with leadership skills.

2 Justin Tuck, defensive end — If this list was made midseason, there'd be no way that Tuck would've made the cut. But he tallied 8 1/2 of his 11 sacks in the final five games. Bringing back the two-time champ is a must.

3 Stevie Brown, safety — Brown, who was on a one-year deal, tore his left ACL during a preseason game on Aug. 24. But he should be healthy by fall and the coaching staff raves about his instincts and playmaking abilities.

Free agents to let walk

1 Hakeem Nicks, wide receiver — It shouldn't surprise Giants fans to see his name here, as Nicks has regressed mightily over the last two seasons. He tallied just 56 catches for 896 yards, and no touchdowns in 2013.

2 Chris Snee, right guard — He's a respected veteran, not to mention Coughlin's son-in-law, but Snee's time has seemingly passed. He's been through lingering injuries over the years that have sapped away his abilities.

3 Corey Webster, cornerback — Giants fans have seen the back of Webster's jersey too many times over the years. Even $1.25 million in "dead money" if he's cut wouldn't be a deterrent to jettisoning him.

Free agents to target

1 Alex Mack, center, Cleveland — Since David Baas could be a cap casualty, the Giants could make a run at a veteran center like Mack of the Browns. Eli Manning needs the protection to avoid so many interceptions.

2 Maurice Jones-Drew, tailback, Jacksonville — Andre Brown will likely be brought back — at the right price — but if his agents overplay their hand, Big Blue could go another way, like the three-time All Pro Jones-Drew.

3 Scott Chandler, tight end, Buffalo — New York won't splurge on the tight end position, because they never do, but they can reach out to a productive player like Chandler of the Bills. He spent time with the Giants previously.

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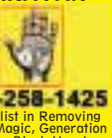

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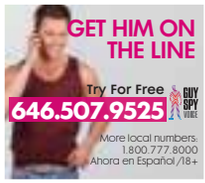

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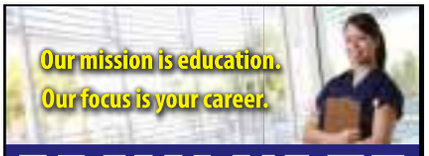

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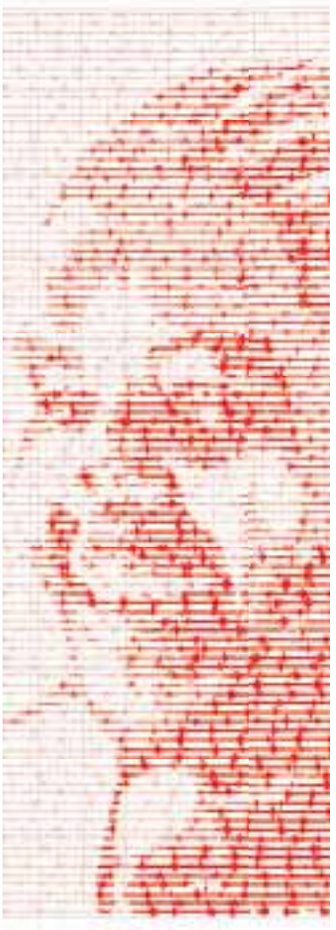

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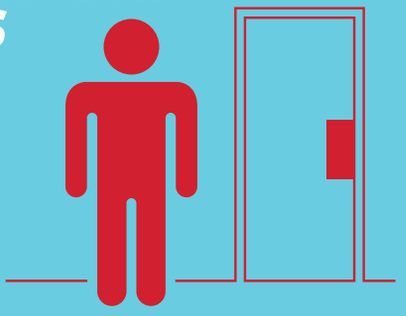

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